

CLAIMS

1. Method of inerting a vat (1) containing a consumable liquid, in particular wine, of the type in which an inerting gas heavier than air is injected into the gas overhead of the vat and, during this injection, the excess gas is removed through a purge orifice (17) of the vat, characterized in that the inerting gas is injected into the vat substantially below the upper wall of the vat and close to the free surface (15) of the liquid.
2. Method according to Claim 1, characterized in that the velocity of the inerting gas close to the free surface (15) of the liquid is reduced just before it is injected.
3. Method according to Claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the oxygen level in the gas overhead of the vat (1) is measured, and the injection is stopped when this level is less than or equal to a predetermined maximum value.
4. Method according to any one of Claims 1 to 3, characterized in that use is made of an inerting gas containing substantially 75 to 80 % of a neutral gas, in particular argon, the remainder being carbon dioxide.
5. Device for inerting a vat for consumable liquid, in particular wine (1), of the type comprising a source (9) of an inerting gas heavier than air, an orifice (8), connected to this source, for letting gas into the vat, and an orifice (17) for purging the vat, characterized in that it comprises at least one downward injection tube (13) intended to be connected via its upper end to the inlet orifice (8) and extending to near the free surface (15) of the liquid.
6. Device according to Claim 5, characterized in that the injection tube (13) has a gas diffuser (14) at its lower end.
7. Device according to Claim 5 or 6, characterized in that the upper part (13A) of the injection tube (13)

is enclosed by the side wall (16) of a tubular connector (5) which can be fitted onto an upper opening (2) of the vat (1), said side wall being provided with said purge orifice (17).

5 8. Device according to Claim 7, characterized in that said side wall (16) is provided with a second orifice (18) to which a safety valve (7) is connected.

9. Device according to any one of Claims 5 to 8, characterized in that the injection tube (13) has an
10 adjustable length.

10. Device according to any one of Claims 5 to 9, characterized in that said source (9) contains a mixture of substantially 75 to 80 % of a neutral gas, in particular argon, and of carbon dioxide.

15 11. Inerting gas for consumable liquid, in particular wine (20), consisting of substantially 75 to 80 % of argon and of carbon dioxide, preferably of substantially 80 % of argon and 20 % of carbon dioxide.